

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, Feb. 12, 2004

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SCHIP PROVIDE HEALTH COVERAGE TO 5.8 MILLION CHILDREN IN 2003

About 5.8 million children who otherwise would not have health coverage were enrolled in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) at some point during fiscal year 2003 -- a 9 percent increase from the previous year, HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced today.

During fiscal year 2003, a total of 5.8 million children were enrolled in SCHIP at some point, according to the latest figures from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. That compares with 5.3 million children in fiscal year 2002.

"Working with governors, we've made tremendous progress in providing millions of children with needed health coverage," Secretary Thompson said. "These new numbers show that even in economic hard times, the states place a high priority on getting needed health insurance to children. As a result, more children now have needed access to regular health care services."

Created in 1997 with bipartisan support in Congress, SCHIP is a state and federal partnership designed to provide health insurance coverage to uninsured children, many of whom come from working families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid but too low to afford private health insurance. The SCHIP law authorized \$40 billion in federal funds over 10 years to improve children's access to health coverage.

The 2003 enrollment statistics, prepared by HHS' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) based on state reported enrollment, is consistent with a recent HHS statistical report showing that a higher percentage of American children had health insurance in the first half of 2003.

"We continue to work with states to assure that uninsured children enroll in SCHIP and Medicaid," CMS Acting Administrator Dennis Smith said. "As a result, we are now seeing more children with access to health care. Secretary Thompson and I will continue to do all we can to strengthen this program so states can cover more children in the future."

SCHIP enrollment numbers by state will be available later today at <http://www.cms.gov/schip/enrollment>.

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